

An Interview With

ORPHA KENDALL

February 9, 1985

Orpha Kendall was interviewed on February 9, 1985, at the MacGregor Ranch. Lennie Bemiss conducted the interview.

The tape is on file at the Estes Park Public Library and may be checked out. The reader should keep in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken, rather than the written word.

The Estes Park oral history project is jointly sponsored by the Estes Park Area Historical Museum and the Estes Park Public Library.

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Interview with Orpha Kendall (OK)  
Date of Interview: February 9, 1985  
Interviewer: Lennie Bemiss (LB)  
Location: MacGregor Ranch

Begin Side 1

LB This is Lennie Bemiss at the Estes Park Area Historical Museum. I'll be interviewing Orpha Kendall at the MacGregor Ranch. The date is February 9, 1985.

Orpha, we've been trying to get together to do this for a long time-- so finally! It's sort of a gray, snowy day outside; and up Black Canyon it is so beautiful here. Not much has been written or said about Muriel MacGregor, the person; and you're about the only one left who knew her personally and who could throw some light on Muriel, the person. How about starting at the beginning, which is always a good place to start. When did you move to Estes Park?

OK I moved to Estes Park in October of 1964, and we were living over at the Black Canyon Ranch, over at Dr. Myers.

LB Now, is that where the Black Canyon Restaurant is now?

OK Yes.

LB All right. Was it a restaurant or a ranch?

OK It was a restaurant. It was a dude ranch.

LB A dude ranch, O.K.

OK They had horses there and cabins and things, but we were building condos.

LB I see. That was the purpose. Your husband Orval is a contractor.

OK Yes, and we lived on the ranch, and he was building the condos that winter.

LB Now, approximately how far is that? We're overlooking Black Canyon right now.

OK Right.

LB The restaurant?

OK About a half mile.

LB All right.

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\*For the purpose of indicating unclear passages that could not be transcribed, ellipses (...) have been used throughout the manuscript.

OK And at that time the MacGregor property surrounded Dr. Curry Myers' property. What is Black Canyon Hills was MacGregor property. It was divided up in '75, I guess, and the relatives got fifty-seven acres of our Elk Pasture, we call it. But I met Muriel because she kept cattle up there, and the fences were down. I fixed fence day after day trying to keep the cattle in, and so one day I decided I'd just bring them back over here. I knew who she was and where the cattle belonged, but I hadn't met her. So, I was coming down the road behind the cattle, and this old Ford pulled up beside me. She said, "Are these your cattle?"

I said, "No."

And she said, "Where are you going with them?"

I said, "I'm going to take them home. They belong to Miss MacGregor." Muriel MacGregor probably I said--although I never called her Muriel to her face. Everybody else did, so I'm sure that I said that they belong to Muriel MacGregor and that I'm taking them back over to her place.

And she said, "Well, I'm Muriel MacGregor, and those are my cattle. What I want to know is why you didn't just call the police instead of taking the cattle home?"

I said, "I never thought to call the police when cattle are out. I come from a farming community, and when you see stock on the road, you put it in--you don't call the police."

She said, "Well, anyone else would have called the police." And I could hardly believe it.

LB That's rather indicative of her frame of mind at that point.

OK That's right, and she was right! Anyone else would have.

LB Because they did.

OK Yes, I found out afterwards that I was the oddball.

LB This was in 1964 in the fall?

OK Yes, about the first of November when the cattle were getting hungry and the grass was getting poor over there.... So I brought them in, fixed a little fence here, then I stayed, and she took me back. She drove me back. And, of course, I'd heard all the stories that there were to hear about her, being a newcomer and so close.

LB What kind of stories?

OK Oh, how she carried dead calves around in her car. I'll have to admit I did look to see whether there were any dead calves in the car.

OK There weren't. She was a very soft-spoken woman. I thought, "Well, you know, maybe I should forget these stories and just find out what she's like because it seemed like just going back--maybe I spent fifteen minutes with her--and, oh, she thanked me profusely for bringing the cattle in. I thought well maybe she isn't quite as bad as the stories, you know. So, every time I would hear something I'd think about this soft-spoken lady who had taken me back and how quiet she was.

And, then, we were looking to rent something else, and there was an ad in the paper of a house to rent. It was on Evergreen Lane, and I thought it would be real handy. It was so close to my husband's work.

LB Yes, now where is Evergreen Lane?

OK It's right where--just past Otie Whiteside's.

LB Off of Highway 36?

OK No, it's just right down here.

LB Oh, you mean almost adjacent to MacGregor Ranch.

OK Yes.

LB All right.

OK Just on the other side, and it was just almost straight across from the entrance to the Black Canyon Restaurant. So, I called about it, and the lady said that she would meet me there at a certain time. It was Miss MacGregor. But the house wasn't what we wanted. It wasn't large enough. We still had a son at home then, and this was a one-bedroom house with a sleeping porch. The sleeping porch was strictly summer. It's what we call the Aunt's House. Well, Miss MacGregor just wanted us to rent that house so bad. She would have done whatever she had to so that we could rent it. I realized from that that she was very lonesome.

LB She was reaching out for friendship.

OK Yes. So, I started running over when I had time. It wasn't on a daily basis, but maybe once or twice a week.

LB Did you rent that house, or did you rent elsewhere?

OK No, we did not. We rented elsewhere. I also had my mother-in-law with me at that time. Before that winter was over, we did; and so I needed more room. So, we bought a house out on High Drive. But as I'd come to town, I'd run out and see how things were going over at the job. Then, I'd come out over here. So, by spring it was almost a daily thing. I'd stop and bring her mail from the mailbox on the corner. She was crippled up real bad, and she'd had a stroke.

LB Now, this was in 1964?

OK 'Sixty-four and the spring of '65.

LB She was born in '04, so she was 60.

OK Right.

LB About 60 at that point, we'll say.

OK She was a heavy woman, and she'd had a stroke that affected her left side so it was hard for her to get around. By the spring--

LB Prior to the time you had met her, she'd had a stroke?

OK About fifteen years before. She told me that--

LB About age 45?

OK U-hm. She told me that she had fallen in the road one night on the ice. She was at the cabin out by Mary's Lake and hurt her hip, but afterwards the doctors said that it had been a stroke.

LB It had been a stroke that had dropped her.

OK And that's the reason she couldn't get over it.

LB It does seem young, doesn't it?

OK It was. So, by the spring she was wanting me to take her to the chiropractor down in Loveland. We didn't have one at that time. So, I started taking her once a week.... My son had gone to service by then, and he was in Vietnam--was getting ready to go to Vietnam, I guess; and she kept up on the news and always visited about him, you know. Then, we had some grandchildren, and she visited about the grandchildren.

LB Did you used to bring the grandchildren out to the ranch?

OK Yes. We had one grandchild that was living here in town, a granddaughter, and she came with me often. Miss MacGregor liked her, and she'd show her things that she did when she was a child and how her swings hung in the tree.... She really enjoyed her. We also had two grandsons, but they were in Greeley. And that summer I had them, and Miss MacGregor enjoyed them. I thought maybe it was just because Carrie was a little girl, you know, that she had more in common with her, but she enjoyed the boys also. In fact, she had a horse here then. The horse's name was Winnie....

LB Winnie? W-i-n-n-i-e?

OK And that horse must have been thirty years old. It was so sway-

- OK backed you didn't even have to worry about the kids falling off. Just like a nautral seat, but I'd put the kids up and let them ride around. Miss MacGregor just practically lived in the car by that time because--
- LB Because she couldn't....
- OK I'd come out in the morning and put her in the car and help her to the car. I didn't put her in, you know, but I'd help her to the car. Then, I'd come back in the evening and help her into the house.
- LB So, during the day, then, did she use her car to drive around the ranch?
- OK Yes, she did, and at that time we still had the Fish Creek property that was pasture and the McGraw Ranch property and the property of John Hayden. So it's a half day's job anyhow to drive around to those pastures. So, she would just drive around to the different pastures and watch the cattle. That's where some of the stories got started that she just couldn't stand to see her cattle out in the pasture because she had about eight hours to spend in the car. It was just as nice to sit out there where the cattle were as it was here. Then, she was there if anything went wrong. She couldn't get out of the car any longer to work on fence. There are people that tell that they saw her in the last few years out there fixing fence, but they didn't ever really see her fixing fence after 1965.
- LB Because she wasn't able to get in and out of the car.
- OK Because she wasn't able to get in and out of the car alone.
- LB From this hip injury or from the stroke?
- OK Right. She dragged her left foot so badly that she wore out that shoe about every two weeks.
- LB Every two weeks? Incredible! What would she do for shopping then?
- OK I did all the shopping. She called Richardson's for her groceries, and they delivered them.
- LB Now, this was a grocery store?
- OK Yes. It's now Riverside Grocery Store. Riverside Market I guess they call it.
- LB Oh, over by--
- OK Over by Fun City.
- LB By Fun City. All right. And they did deliver?

- OK Yes. They delivered until the time she died. They were still delivering groceries. A man named Barney that still works there.
- LB Do you know his last name?
- OK I don't know his last name. I should, but I don't. But he delivered groceries to her for at least three years. Then, Mr. and Mrs. Richardson had a son named J. Bruns.
- LB J. Bruns?
- OK U-hm. Bruns, and he delivered groceries. He was a friend of my son. We had two sons in town, and he was a friend of theirs. He delivered groceries to her. But anyone who delivered groceries to her, anybody who came to do anything, me included, never got farther than the back porch. She'd come to the back porch, and they would bring the groceries in. She would take them in and put them away.
- LB When she was in the house, did she ever use a wheelchair, or did she ever have one?
- OK She had one, but after she had had the stroke in 1970.
- LB Later on, I see.
- OK But no, in those years she used canes, two canes. There was always a lot of talk that she carried a gun, and I think that maybe people saw her at a distance with her canes--that's the only thing I can think of because there weren't any guns.
- LB Right.
- OK There wasn't a gun, but she just walked with those two canes. She could get from the car to the house fairly well by hanging on to the side of the house, but then there were three steps. She couldn't get up those three steps, or she couldn't get down them. So, that was where I had to help her.
- LB Right.
- OK And she couldn't get in and out of the car alone because this left leg was just useless. I had to put her in the car so I know that she had no control over that leg and could not manage it.
- So, I took her to the chiropractor for about a year, I suppose. Then, he said, "You know, if I'm giving you relief, fine, but I'm not helping the problem at all." She was getting so heavy that it was hard on me getting her into the car. So, she would go occasionally, when the pain got too bad. She would have me take her down, but not on a regular basis any more.
- There were people that lived here on the ranch that knew her. Virginia Denning knew her. Her parents rented a cabin from her. She spent summers here.



- LB Boyce was her maiden name, wasn't it?
- OK Right, and there were quite a few of those children, I think.
- LB And you say that Virginia Boyce's parents had rented a cabin here on the ranch?
- OK Yes, they rented the Quiner house.
- LB Quiner?
- OK Quiner, Q-u-i-n-e-r. I think for about ten summers. And she talked a lot about the Boyce children, although Virginia was gone and married by that time. Ann Boyce was Virginia's mother. She was still coming to the ranch when I first came here although Virginia, of course, was married and not here.
- LB Yes.
- All right, you have mentioned more than once about the stories you have heard about Muriel. Do you want to elaborate any on that and as to why these stories existed?
- OK You know, I honestly don't. Yes, I'll elaborate, but I honestly don't know why the stories existed. There was a story that she went out to the mausoleum and sat and talked to her parents. That one I remember about first-hand because my parents--my mother had died not long before I met Miss MacGregor; and when we'd go to Loveland, I'd go to the cemetery. I did this on a regular basis, you know, and one day she said, "Mrs. Kendall, do people think you're crazy because you go to the cemetery?"
- I said, "I don't know; I don't really care, you know."
- And she said, "Well,--"
- LB A part of the grieving process, of course.
- OK And she said, "Well, people call me 'that crazy Miss MacGregor' because I go to the mausoleum to meditate."
- Needless to say, I never took her back to the cemetery, but that set me to thinking, too, you know, people think what they want to.
- LB Of course.
- OK But that was one of the stories. In fact, in 1967 the mausoleum was broken into, and her father's casket was broken into.
- LB Oh, good grief!
- OK It had for years, I guess, been a part of high school initiation to have your picture taken between the MacGregor caskets.

LB Oh!

OK They're solid copper caskets with hermetically sealed glass liners, and they can be opened to view the bodies. I guess that's really-- I've seen quite a few pictures. I guess that's the way--open the copper part of the casket so that you could see the body. In 1967 some kids were messing around and somebody threw a rock through her father's casket so there was glass in her father's casket.

LB Disgraceful!

OK So, I had the mausoleum closed. My son went in and closed the casket; and then we had the Belleau brothers, Bob and Jim Belleau went out and put cement blocks in where there had been french doors and had that blocked up. Then, when Miss MacGregor died in 1970, my husband built a platform above and between her parents' caskets, and we put her in there.

LB And then sealed it?

OK And then sealed it. We used native rock so it couldn't be opened. But that was one of the stories.

People would say, you know, that she'd say, "I don't know whether I should buy more hay or not." Frank McGraw told this story that she'd say, "Well, I don't know whether I should buy more hay or not. I'll have to talk with my father"--after her father had been dead, Frank always said, "For twenty years." And he hadn't been dead that long, but actually I think she was thinking about it or maybe pricing hay other places or something. I don't know. I don't think she--I never heard her refer to her parents as though they were still alive.

LB Right.

OK And I was with her on a daily basis for almost five years. So that was one of Frank's funny stories. You know, I don't know whether there was anything to it or not, but I never heard her refer to her parents as though they were even recently gone.

LB Well, that simply could have been her way as many people do. They just--miss those who are gone, and they think about them so intensely that maybe she gained inspiration from just simply meditating and feeling like she was in communication.

OK I don't think that was the case though because I was with her so much and we visited so much. I never saw that. Now, I talked about my mother a lot because she was recently gone. She died in November of '63, and I missed her.

LB Right, right.

OK And I talked about my mother a lot, but I don't talk about her as much now as I do my father. My father has been gone ten years,

OK and I still talk about him a lot....

LB Which is a normal process.

OK I think--oftentimes I wonder--oh, I'll say, for instance, my dad always said, "Do something, even if it's wrong" or "If you have time to do it, do it right the first time." And things like that, but I didn't hear Muriel say things like that.

LB She just didn't refer to her parents that much?

OK No.

LB Esoteric stories....

OK Yes. I think one of the things that probably surprised me as much as anything was her love for children. I had heard that she was a hermit and didn't like people. That was a fallacy also. She did like people. She had a lot of friends and saw a lot of people. The Eilerts that lived up above--

LB Eilert? E-i--

OK E-i-l-e-r-t. He was with the Park Service. Hazel Hanks also lived up there, and they visited as they drove through. One Christmas I brought a meal out to Muriel, just a part of our Christmas dinner, you know; and Hazel Hanks had already been there and brought Christmas dinner for her. She talked to Ruth Herndon a lot, and, of course, Ann Boyce whenever she was here. John Ramey was her insurance man, and I think she talked to him over the phone more than anything, but Bertha also took care of the rentals--five rental houses here, summer rentals, and Bertha handled those for her. And she dealt with people for hay.

LB Now, who did Muriel have to help her if she was car-fast so to speak? There had to be somebody.

OK All right. Bob Cheney helped her several winters feeding. Mr. and Mrs. Menard from the Webb Cottages down here.

LB M-e?

OK -n-a-r-d. They helped her. They had horses and liked to ride. So, they helped her with the cattle. She paid Bob Cheney. She also had a deal where he got firewood in exchange for helping.

LB And he could cut--on her land?

OK He could cut the firewood here in exchange for helping her. Frank helped her. He lives out off of Dry Gulch.

LB Frank Farnik?

OK F-a-r-n-i-k. He still lives there. And she paid him. The last few years she traded him 160 acres of pasture in Piper Meadow in exchange for him helping her with the fences. Everett Hattan helped her some. Bill Van Horn hayed one winter. Brad Miller--

LB Brad Miller?

OK Brad Miller--I think Frank Farnik's son-in-law, but I'm not sure about that. Jerry Winpegler helped her.

LB So, she was able to get some assistance on the ranch?

OK Oh, yes. Then, I helped her also.

LB What did you do?

OK Oh, I checked calves, helped with baby calves, helped move cows to pasture, just generally looked them over to see whether anything needed to be done.

LB Did she raise hay every year? Was there always a--

OK She did, but--

LB Was this planted, or was it native grasses that were cut for hay?

OK Both. There are meadow grasses, and there are timothy and clover.

LB Interspersed, or are they separate?

OK No.... See, Muriel cut hay until about 1960, I guess. It was during the Korean conflict when she couldn't get help, and then she started having to buy hay. When we didn't cut hay out here, the hay would be, you know, waist high. It used to be at least three feet high, so there was a lot of grazing in the meadow for the cattle. We didn't--the ranch didn't cut any hay again until after she died, maybe '72.

LB U-hm.

OK John Ramey was helping then, and that summer he irrigated. We had Al Rose, and then we cut the hay. We got one hundred and twenty-seven ton, and we really thought we'd done something.

LB That was fantastic! After all those years of not harvesting.

OK U-hm.

LB And you say you irrigated. Did you use the original irrigation ditches?

OK Yes, we still do.

LB You still do!

- OK We had the original plat of the ditches. The water rights were adjudicated in 1875.
- LB In 1875! It dates back, and what rights does the ranch have?
- OK So many acre feet, and I'm not sure--it's almost all of Black Canyon Creek. Now, some of that went with the easement to the Park. But there is more than enough. In 1904--
- LB Well, what's the--isn't there a town of Estes Park Water System up Black Canyon?
- OK Yes.
- LB And that dates from when? Didn't Stanley--
- OK In 1904.
- LB In 1904.
- OK Donald MacGregor gave Stanley water rights, whatever the town needed, or whatever Stanley needed for the town is what it should be in exchange for the ranch getting water to their houses. So, all of these houses have had running water since 1904.
- LB Was it specific?
- OK Oh, yes, there's an agreement on that.
- LB A specific number of feet?
- OK I'm sure it was.
- LB O.K.
- OK I haven't seen it for years. That's one of the things that is gone, but there is one on record in what was Vic McCracken's office. So, then, when Stanley gave the waterworks to the town, why the MacGregors just carried on. We still are. But there were a lot of people. I was surprised when I'd come out. Sometimes, she'd say she had talked to so-and-so today. She had good contacts. Of course, she had a phone, and she knew everyone. I remember when-- I suppose it was the last one of Bob Cheney's children--the child was born. She wanted them to have her high chair. So, they have her high chair and maybe the crib. I'm not sure about the crib....
- LB Now, did Muriel have any friends that--well, from college or--?
- OK She had--
- LB That type of thing. I know I have read she maintained, well, the entire family from the word go--maintained diaries, logs, etc.
- OK Yes, we have Christmas cards and letters from people whom she went to college with.

LB Correspondence.

OK People who came here and spent a summer and became friends.

LB And she did maintain a correspondence?

OK She did with a lot of people. I don't remember most of the names now, but Victoria Fowler Gross was one of them. She was one of the people she had named as a trustee.

LB As a trustee--Victoria Fowler Gross.

OK She had met her in college when she went back to get her law degree.

LB And when Muriel got her degree, wasn't she one of the first or second women in the state to be admitted?

OK She was one of the first or second to be admitted to practice before the Supreme Court. So, I suppose she--

LB Before the Supreme Court?

OK We have in the museum a certificate which shows in 1933 she could practice before the Supreme Court.

They were friends with the McCreerys. There is a reference in the diaries to the McCreerys being snowed in, and Don would hitch up a team of horses and sleigh, go and get the McCreerys, and take them to town in the event that they'd have an early September snow. The McCreerys hadn't gotten out of there yet.

She was a good friend--and this probably doesn't sound right to you--but she was a good friend to Eleanor Hondius. She was a good friend to Eleanor's son Pieter until the day she died. Eleanor printed a little book that didn't have a publisher; and although it didn't sound very flattering to the MacGregors, I know she visited with Eleanor. I can remember Eleanor coming out here, seeing her come out here with her big hats.

Then, another woman was Mrs. Sherbino, Bess Sherbino. They'd come from Women's Club. Muriel had a terrible sweet tooth, just terrible, and these ladies would bring mints and things from the Women's Club meeting.

LB Did Muriel ever belong to the Women's Club?

OK I don't think she did. Her mother did, but I don't believe that Muriel did. See, when Muriel came back home from college, her mother had had a stroke, and her mind was gone. So, she had to take care of her mother. She did practice law here on the ranch, but she had to stay here and watch her. Her mother would wander off, and the neighbors would bring her back. Gerry Boyd, who lives down here now, was one of the neighbors; and there are people that are just right on top of the hill that I never can remember their

- OK name, but they tell me about when they were children back in the sixties. When they were children, they would come over and play.
- LB To your knowledge was there ever a romance in Muriel's life?
- OK I don't know whether it was a romance or not, but she got a letter. In her diary in the thirties it tells that she got a letter from Willie, and it made her father mad.
- LB Willie?
- OK Willie, u-hm.
- LB Any last name?
- OK No.
- LB No last name.
- OK And she stayed out of college that next year.
- LB You say that she wrote in her diary that her father was mad because--
- OK "Papa mad!" "Papa mad" with lots of asterisks. One time I said, "Well, it's a shame that you didn't marry. You enjoy children so much."
- And she said, "My dear, don't you know a Scottish child is born to carry on the family name? ...."
- LB Being female was no good. She had to take care of her parents.
- OK U-hm. So, we never talked about it any more. I'm sure it was a touchy subject with her. When she called me "my dear," I knew I was out of favor.
- LB Oh, oh!
- OK It was always Mrs. Kendall, and I always called her Miss MacGregor. All of my children and all of my grandchildren just called her Miss MacGregor, that's all. She would remember birthdays, the children's birthdays. I think children were a big part of her life. Being able to see children, she loved seeing children. Bobby Freeman and ..., you know. She was so interested in what the children were doing.
- LB Would she at Christmas time do anything in particular for the children, or did she--observe the holidays at all?
- OK No, I really don't think she did. She gave me presents, but nothing ever wrapped. And it was always something of her mother's or her grandmother's. She did the same way with my grandchildren. She would give them a doll, or one of the grandsons she gave a little iron car like a little truck--things like that, but I never saw her give a gift that was wrapped. I don't know whether she did or not,

OK but I didn't see it.

She was interested in town affairs.

LB Was she ever active in the town?

OK I don't believe she was.

LB Her father was.

OK Her father was, and perhaps Muriel was when she was young. I don't know, but I haven't seen any evidence of it. Oh, shortly after I got to know her, a year or two, some of her cattle had gotten out and the police had impounded them on the rodeo grounds. Some boys here in town, married men, went over and rodeoed a little bit. One of them got kicked, and he hot his gun and shot it. And so, then, the police called me in and wanted to know about it. I said, "Well, I'll tell Miss MacGregor." ....

"Well," he said, "she can press charges. It's her prerogative if she wants to." So, we let it go for a few days, and they found the boys that did it. They found one boy that did it, and it was ironic. It was a son-in-law of friends of ours, personal friends of mine and Orval's; and that's what made it really touchy. But I told her we weren't in on it, and she said, "Well, Mrs. Kendall, someone told me that he has children."

And I said, "Yes, he does. He has three little boys."

She said, "I wonder whether they needed the meat."

I said, "I don't know. I doubt it." I knew that Scooter had a drinking problem, but I didn't think he needed money.

LB U-hm.

OK Unless it was because he did have a drinking problem. He had a good job, and besides I knew their grandparents wouldn't let them go hungry. But she decided not to press charges because there was a chance that those children were hungry.

LB Right.

OK The meat spoiled, and when I found that out I wished that I'd said I know damned good and well they're not hungry and let her go ahead and press charges. But I didn't.

One of the boys that was with him then came out and helped me about five years ago. He said, "You know, I think I'll be able to sleep better nights now." He said, "I was with Scooter when he shot that cow." And he said, "I felt bad about it all these years. If I can help--you let me know." And he's helped a lot.

LB He's been a good volunteer.



- OK A good volunteer, and it just took a few years to be able to see it.
- LB I know I've read about the barn burning--that the barn was burned. When did that happen? What led up to that?
- OK I don't know what led up to it. It was July 4, 1969, and my husband and I had gone with my father and step-mother over on the Western Slope to get cherries. It seemed like people knew when I was gone. Something happened only when I was out of town.
- LB So, by this time it was generally known that you were her support system.
- OK Yes, right. Well, yes, there would be warrants for her arrest for cattle being loose in town or something, and the police would call me. People knew that I took her car into town and got it serviced, and I got extra groceries for her. Yes, it was generally known that if you couldn't get hold of Muriel to call me. Something that I've always felt bad about is the first year that we were here I didn't tell people, when I'd hear one of those stories. I didn't say, "I know that's not so" because we were just new in town, and I didn't know, you see. I thought maybe some of those stories were new and were true. Now, I wish I'd said, "You know, use a little common sense," but I didn't. I have lots of times since, but I felt bad that I didn't hold up for her because I knew right from the beginning that they were lies. I just didn't have myself convinced.
- LB What really drew you to Muriel to be so supportive? Very few people would have done what you've done.
- OK Well, I liked her. She was a walking history book, and I enjoy history. I enjoyed that part, but I helped her for about four years, I guess, and then I had a heart attack, a bad heart attack....
- LB When was that, what year?
- OK It was in March of 1969. Dr. Mall said, "You forget about things you've done in the past because you won't do them again, but you can lead a fairly long life if you exercise and do like I tell you." So, I think that was the winter we had Bill Van Horn, the summer that we had Bill Van Horn take care of the cattle because I wasn't able to get her in and out of the car. But I came back out of it a lot better than they thought, and by fall I was able to help her again. By that time I had already taken over a lot of the things, like she took care of her business, but any important mail like checks to the bank or anything I took care of that. So, I made a deal with the Lord, and my dad just had a fit. You know I was raised Assembly of God and Nazarene. And I said, "If I can just live to see my grandchildren raised, I'll spend the rest of my life just helping others. I didn't think it would be just her.
- LB Right.

- OK But it seemed to be that there was where I was needed. I tried to do a few other things along the way, but mostly this has taken up much of my time.
- LB Well, of course.
- OK And I feel that I can help more people--
- LB It's been a tremendous struggle to save the ranch!
- OK It's been a terrible struggle!
- LB To save the ranch!
- OK From 1970 when she died, October 22, 1970, she thought she had things-- she had told me she purposely was not going to leave me the power of attorney. She gave John Ramey power of attorney. She said, "I think too much of you as a friend to name you as a trustee or give you power of attorney because my relatives are going to come out of the woodwork, just like the ground squirrels out of the ground when I die." She said, "That's just too much. I wouldn't put that on you."
- LB So, she knew.
- OK So, she knew that it was going to be a fight, but she thought she had things taken care of.
- LB So, she suspected that upon her death these long obscure relatives--
- OK There had been a break in the family on Muriel's mother's side of the family in 1905 when Muriel's grandfather Koontz died, and so she knew, you know, what was coming. She gave me the names and as near as she could the addresses of twenty-seven second and third hand cousins and four first cousins and an uncle.
- LB Had she been in contact with the family?
- OK No, she had not been in contact with her mother's family for about twenty-five years, I guess, keeping in mind her mother had been dead for many years. Also her Uncle Halbert had been out to see her, and her Uncle George's son, Ronald, in the five years that I had been there.
- LB U-hm.
- OK But only once each, and some cousins from Wisconsin had been here. I had met them. But, no, not really kept in touch with them. When she died and I called the ones in Denver, they said--the lady, who had been married to this man for twenty-five years, said, "Oh, you're mistaken. We don't have any relatives in Estes Park. I've been married to Frank...for twenty-five years, and I know."
- And I said, "You're right, you don't any longer, but you did have." They didn't have time to file a lawsuit yet, but then they did to break--they wanted to break the will. I was charged with using

- OK undue influence to get her to leave the property the way she did. Purposely, I wasn't here when the will was written because she knew that that was what would happen. And another thing, she never--
- LB Who was her attorney?
- OK She really didn't have a lawyer.
- LB Did she write her own will?
- OK She did not write her own will. It would have been better if she had, but we had tried to get a hold of Ed Hummer. He had just gotten back from Mexico and said, "Oh, I don't want to write it today. I'll come tomorrow." Dr. Mall was waiting to take her to the hospital. He wanted her to go to the hospital and have this surgery, so she said, "Call that so-called attorney Carlson in Greeley." I called him, and I went home. He was here, and John Ramey came out and John's wife, I believe. Yes, they were both witnesses to the will, and they came out and were here with her.... Carlson wrote the will.
- LB William Albion Carlson.
- OK William Albion Carlson wrote the will. It was a poorly written will although it said about what Muriel wanted, I think, because in the last five years before she died that I helped her, I had been with her at Boulder and CSU and UNC. She was trying to leave the ranch to one of the universities, and she thought CSU would be the ideal one.
- LB Oh, she did! Now, I hadn't heard this--that she had directly tried to leave the ranch to the university.
- OK Oh, yes, she sure did! Dr. Morgan even had some correspondence that she had had with him before she died. It was funny because he was then named trustee after Victoria Gross died, but, yes, that's what she wanted was to give it to a college.
- LB Directly to an educational institution.
- OK But they didn't want it. None of them wanted it because she didn't have the money to endow it. It was just a liability.
- LB Land, but no money.
- OK Right, she was land poor. Dr. Morgan said that they had some correspondence. He had offered to give her a life tenancy of the ranch, and they would take it over whenever she left it to them. If she'd done it in '65, they would have taken it over then, but she would have still had a place to live. She didn't want to do that. She wanted to live here and know that it was going to continue to be this way. She was so fond of children, you see, is the reason I have heard that her will says proceeds go to a charity for education.
- LB To a charity or education? For or or?

OK For.

LB O.K.

OK And I have leaned heavily toward education because she--

LB Outdoor education?

OK Yes, well, all kinds of education because she was so fond of children. .... She just wanted it to be left the way it is so that people could come here and see what her grandparents went through.

LB Living history.

OK You didn't hear much about Living History Farms in those days.

LB No, not then. Just the last decade, but that is what it is.

OK Yes, that really is what she wanted; and, in fact, we had some problems with that because the IRS said, "You know, that's--she's controlling her land after she's gone. She really can't do that. You just can't leave something in perpetuity and not have to pay taxes on it." But we convinced them that we wanted to be an educational facility and that we were working at it.... Otherwise, we would have had to pay about two million in inheritance tax. So, I don't know maybe that would be another story--the struggle.

## Begin Side 2

OK But you hadn't known that she wanted to leave it? You hadn't heard that she wanted to leave it?

LB No, no, I had not heard this that she had tried to leave it directly to a university, but they would not take it.

Well, let's sort of proceed ahead then and talk about the struggle. Muriel died--this is covered, I know. Clare Arthur has just done a history for the Park Service, and she has covered a lot of the history of the MacGregor family. Only you know the struggle it was to keep the ranch alive, so let's sort of take it from there where Muriel started--.

OK Well, Clare didn't want to get into the struggle. She didn't want to get into the fight we had with the attorneys and all, but Muriel's will stated that she was leaving her ranch, 3700 acres, known as the Black Canyon Ranch, the MacGregor Black Canyon Ranch, to be operated as a working cattle ranch and her herd of Black Angus cattle maintained, in so far as was possible. She named three trustees: William Albion Carlson, his wife Jane Carlson, and her friend Victoria Fowler Gross as the trustees. Mr. Carlson was named the administrator. In later years Mr. Carlson was to bang his fist on the table and tell me, "You're forgetting that I wrote that will and put a loophole in it, and that loophole is: 'in so far as is possible.' If I could get rid of you and your volunteers, it would not be possible."

- OK And I told him that it would be a cold day in hell when he could get rid of me. "I'll be here when you're gone." And that's a lot of the reason I've stayed, is to make sure that he didn't get the ranch for his own purposes, the way he wanted it, and that it would stay the way Muriel wanted it. I have not always been a trustee. I was named by the State in 1978 along with Eldon Freudenburg. We were added as trustees in September, 1978.
- LB So, from three trustees it went to five.
- OK In September of 1978.
- LB O.K.
- OK Muriel died that Thursday morning in Swedish Hospital in Denver. I started calling people. The Carlsons were out of the country.... So, I started calling relatives and whatnot and set up the funeral arrangements with Mr. Kibbey. He had taken care of her parents when they died and already had her casket. We had a service down at Kibbey's, but we didn't put her into the mausoleum until November 18th. Then, we just kind of went ahead without any direction.
- LB What year was this?
- OK Nineteen seventy.
- John Ramey and I were looking after the cattle herd. We had been all summer. So, we just went on as we were. Then, when the Carlsons got back from out of the country, Mr. Carlson asked me to make an inventory. But I need to go back just a little bit. She died on Thursday, and on Sunday morning I came out to feed the cattle. There were three vehicles sitting at the museum, which was just the ranch-house then. I went in and hollered "Hello!" and somebody answered, "In the attic and upstairs." I went up, and there were Mr. and Mrs. Carlson, Victoria Fowler Gross, and Nicky somebody--she's now Mrs. Ed Jersin--going through the trunks.
- LB Ed Jersin? How do you spell that?
- OK J-e-r-s-i-n, Mr. Carlson's attorney. Nicky was an antique dealer in Denver. She said, "This is an antique dealer's dream." I said, "Be sure to put the stuff back in the trunk that it came out of because they're labeled, and each person's belongings are in the trunk that's labeled that way."
- And I went on, and Mr. Carlson assured me that everything was all right. I went on, fed the cattle, went home, and called John Ramey and told him that they were here. He said, "I don't think that's right. I don't think you're supposed to take anything away." And I think he came out and talked to Mr. Carlson, but I'm not positive.
- I came out the next morning, and things were just a mess. They had strung things out from the trunks and had some stuff setting in the middle of the floor--looked like they were going to take and didn't have room or something.

OK So, I called John, and he came out and changed the locks on the house so that they couldn't get back in, but they came and just took the hinges off the doors and removed all the stuff. There were three truckloads of stuff went to Denver to the Things Two Antique Shop for safe keeping. We never saw them again.

So then, Mr. Carlson said, "I'll be up tomorrow or in the next few days, and we'll get things lined out as to what's going to be done." Well, he didn't come for about three weeks. So, we just went ahead and took care of the cattle. Glenn Prosser called and wanted to know whether he could do some articles on Muriel, and I said, "Sure." Muriel and I had been working on a book to be published to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of the homesteading of the ranch, and so I just gave him all the material we had. He ran a series about it in the paper. Mr. Carlson wasn't real happy about it, but he talked to Glenn and went ahead and let him do it. He had some restrictions on it, I think, but I'm not sure what it was.

Mr. Carlson never let me know what was going on. So, he hired John Ramey to take care of the cattle, and we started in. Mr. Carlson would come up and say, "This is an attorney for the relatives or these are some of the relatives or something. We'd like for you to show the ranch to them." Or he would call me and say that somebody would be there such-and-such a time, would we show them--"I'm coming, but I may be a little late." He was always two or three weeks late, but I would go ahead and show them. I even gave some pictures to the relatives. We were just floundering, not knowing what was going on. In about 1973, I believe it was Sam Telep, an attorney from Greeley came.

LB Telep? T-e-l-

OK T-e-l-e-p, just one l. And said he wanted the key to the town gate, which is where the town waterworks were. He wanted to take Mr. Robinson in. They had plans for condos and a golf course in the meadow. And I said, "You do?"

He said, "Yes, would you like to see the plans?"

And I said, "No, I'm not interested in the plans. There won't ever be any!"

"Oh, yes," he said, "I'm working a deal with Mr. Carlson."

So I said, "Maybe I'd better look at those plans." So, Gladys Thomson and I looked at the plans. I called John Ramey and said, "What are we going to do?"

He said, "You'd better call Albion." So, I called Albion, and he said, "Oh, they just want to look around, that's all." So, we realized that we were not getting all the information we should be.

LB This was Carlson?

- OK U-hm. This was probably in '72 because the relatives had already brought a contempt of court case against him. They did not break the will. They brought charges. They were trying to break the will, but they did not break the will. They brought contempt of court charges against Mr. Carlson in court--in district court, and he was found guilty of contempt of court for not doing his duties. And he was removed as administrator.
- LB Who became administrator then?
- OK Jim Beatie, Public Administrator, who is now Senator Beatie, an attorney from Fort Collins, was appointed.
- LB B-
- OK B-e-a-t-i-e. He was appointed administrator. Judge Shannon, Daniel Shannon, was the District Judge. So then immediately--and I didn't know it at the time--but immediately Mr. Carlson hired attorneys to defend him, you know, in court. The ranch paid for it.
- LB U-hm.
- OK So, the attorneys came to me--attorneys for the relatives had been here a lot doing some surveying. I had spent days--John and I or Gladys and I always went--we never just one of us went--always two of us went.
- LB For witness back up.
- OK Right. So I had spent a lot of time with them, and they had seen some of the things that I was doing that they didn't think should have to be done. One of them came to me and said, "Orpha, I can't leave here without telling you why we did what we did. He said, "We knew that we were never going to be able to break that will. As soon as we saw your deposition we knew that Muriel knew exactly what she was doing and that you didn't use undue influence. She was not incompetent." So, he said, "We knew the only way we were going to get anything for our clients was if we deal with Mr. Carlson. We knew we'd have to file a contempt of court; then, we could deal with him to have the charges dropped. So that's exactly what happened," he said. "We settled out of court for a million dollars worth of land."
- LB Directly with Carlson?
- OK Directly with Carlson.
- LB Now, was this before or after Jim Beatie was appointed as administrator?
- OK After. Then, it was the same year, but I'm not sure of the month. We had been in court so many times, but it was the same year. In the meantime while Mr. Beatie was in, I said that I wanted to open the museum. I had said this many times, but Mr. Carlson had always said, "No, no way." So, when Mr. Beatie was in as administrator, I asked him if I could. He said, "If you can do it with \$2500 and be ready

OK to open for the summer season, you can do it." I had the day books where John Ramey's wife and John and Gladys Thomson and I worked sometimes ten and eleven hours a day cleaning furniture.

LB O.K., what year was this?

OK 'Seventy-three.

LB In '73 you opened the museum?

OK U-hm. We opened May 27, '73, when we had it ready, but we had so much stuff to go through.

LB And you started working to get it ready, when?

OK In about November.

LB Of '72. So it was just over.

OK And the Carlsons--I can't remember whether they came for the opening of the museum or not. They were going to, but I don't remember whether they did. We let them know, but Jim Beatie was still as administrator. Then, when Mr. Carlson settled out of court with these attorneys for the relatives, Peter Garrett came to me and told me, "We knew we could deal with Mr. Carlson. That's the only reason we did it."

LB Peter Garrett was the attorney?

OK Yes, they had five attorneys. Let's see, the MacGregor cousins had--there were two attorneys that defended--that held their case. Let's see, I believe that was McKuen, and then the Koontz cousins had Peter Garrett and Melvin Dinner. Mr. Carlson had the firm of Sherman, Howard, Dawson, and Nagel.

LB Sherman, Howard and--?

OK Nagel. And Doug Kane was the attorney for the...firm that handled all of the things for the ranch--for the estate, just an estate. We were not a trust yet. Ed Jersin defended Mr. Carlson in the contempt of court case. That's the one time he was paid \$90,000 for that. But, Peter Garrett came and told me, "That's the only way we knew that we were going to get anything." And he said, "I think you should know what's going on. Here you're working here, working your heart out, and you don't know what's going on. Mr. Carlson's not really lying to you. He's just not telling you what's going on." By this time we were out of money.

We were on a cash basis in town with the light company, with the water department, with the telephone company, and with the hardware store. Every place was on a cash basis because Mr. Carlson wouldn't pay the bills. Finally, I guess the summer of '73 after we'd opened the museum, I really needed electricity all of the time. I made a deal with the light company that they would let me know and give me a chance to pay the light bill instead of turning it off.



- LB U-hm.
- OK And the telephone company the same way. So, then we charged things at the hardware store and the lumber yard with my name as a backup because Mr. Carlson wouldn't pay me sometimes for five or six months. It wasn't anything for him to owe me \$1500 at a time.
- LB Would you submit bills to Carlson or to Beatie?
- OK Well, I submitted them to Beatie while Beatie was in, and he paid-- Beatie paid, but before that Mr. Carlson had things in such bad shape that--
- LB Well, yes.
- OK And, then when Mr. Carlson came back in, he was no better.
- LB So Beatie was in for a while, and then he left.
- OK He was in for fifteen months.
- LB And then Carlson was back again. O.K. All right.
- OK When they made the out-of-court settlement sometime that summer of '73, then Mr. Carlson was--
- LB Reinstated?
- OK Reinstated as administrator, and then we went right back to the same old routine.
- LB O.K., so what was the turning point then?
- OK In about '75, I guess, when I saw these plans, we had a friend, a friend of the ranch write to the Attorney General's office. I don't think, and I know he doesn't care if I tell who it is--Dr. Ben Stearn. He had come out in about '74 or maybe '73 and started helping me. He's a retired veterinarian.
- LB From New Jersey, isn't he?
- OK From New Jersey, and he had come and started helping me with the cattle. Dr. Metzler had helped me a lot, but we didn't have the money to pay him so he had said, you know, that we have Ben set us up with a doctor bag and tell us what to do. But we could do our stuff. So, Dr. Ben wrote to the Attorney General's office and had them come up and see what was going on.
- LB And he did get a response?
- OK He sure did! And we had Ruth Ann Gartland and Jim Riley. Jim Riley is still working on it. He's with the inheritance tax division, and there's another man down there at the Attorney General's office-- Howard Kenison, who took over Ruth Ann Gartland's job.

LB Kenison? K-1-

OK I believe it's K-e.

LB O.K.

OK But they started working. Jim Beatie and I had talked to Dr. Ivo Undauer at UNC and Dr. Casebeer at BOCES, back in '72 when Jim Beatie was in about an educational program. (Editor's note: BOCES--Northern Colorado Board of Educational Services) We had talked to Roger Contor, who was Superintendent of the Park Service. So, when Mr. Jim Beatie was just ready to sign this agreement when Mr. Carlson was reinstated and having pride of authorship, Mr. Carlson rewrote the agreements. They were signed with just a few changes. So, we signed twenty-five year agreements with UNC and BOCES in '75 so they would use the ranch as a --

LB Twenty-five year agreement, right?

OK Twenty-five year agreements, non-exclusive agreements so that we can have Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts--

LB For outdoor education.

OK For all kinds of educational things.

LB Who was the gentleman from BOCES? It was--

OK Dr. Richard Casebeer.

LB Dr. Richard Casebeer.

OK So, we started in having school groups come. By the time Dr. Ben called in the Attorney General's office, we had a pretty good program going and convinced the Attorney General's office that we were dedicated to education. Mr. Riley convinced the inheritance tax division, and we had continued with that. Our program is ten years old this spring.

LB Ten years! Incredible!

OK So, we made it possible. By that time I had both Dr. Ben and Corinne-- Corinne worked--helped with the cattle with roundups. She worked in the museum.

LB Corinne is Corinne Stearn, Ben's wife?

OK Yes. And Dr. Ben worked wherever he was needed, not just veterinary work, you know. He helped feed and helped in the museum, if he was needed, just about everything that could be done. Of course, Gladys Thomson came to me in March.

LB March of what?

OK 'Seventy-three. I ran an ad in the paper. I wanted people to help

- OK paint and get the museum ready, and she answered the ad. She's been here on a daily basis ever since!
- LB That's some volunteer! Who are some of the other volunteers? They deserve to be remembered.
- OK Harriet Burgess has been with me--well, her daughter Debbie started the first summer that we opened the museum. I gave a program at the library on the MacGregors, and Debbie came to me and said, "Could I help at the museum?" And I said, "Certainly." So, I suppose that other than Gladys, Debbie's our first volunteer. Then, Harriet filled in for Debbie when she had something come up, and Harriet manages the museum for me now, co-ordinates the volunteers and all. The longest volunteers that I'll try to remember: Harriet has been with me about eight years, I guess; let's see, Edwina Horst has been here several years; Kay Haughey, Joanne Slizeski, Moline Marriott.
- LB How about outside work, or is this a sexist attitude? Do the women do the outside work?
- OK Gladys, I, and Opal Paglia--Opal Paglia has been here ten years. She brought her horse here in '72. And she helps clean, keeping in mind eight years of this--nine years of this we had housing for the students, overnight housing, and we did the cleaning for that.
- LB Well!
- OK Plus, we took care of the cattle and cleaned the museum. Deac Horst, Edwina's husband helps whenever he's needed. Sarah Pedersen and Hank have helped. I know that I'm going to forget somebody. Harriet has a list of all the volunteers. I made it up for my annual report in August. I had over two hundred names of people from the area--
- LB Who had helped--volunteers?
- OK U-hm. I'm just remembering the ones that have helped for years on a regular basis.
- LB Over two hundred local people contributed their time to help save the MacGregor Ranch?
- OK That's right.
- LB What year was it that Governor Lamm came up, and we had a special ceremony?
- OK I'm not sure whether it was '77 or '78.
- LB It was in there somewhere. And this was received with statewide recognition. Let's get back to actually saving the ranch. The big turning point was when Ben Stearn wrote the Attorney General's office. They became interested in the ranch. They brought the power of the Attorney General's office. Was this about the same time that you and Eldon Freudenburg became trustees?

OK No. It was three years before.

LB Before.

OK Yes. Dr. Ben also brought Eldon Freudenburg to us, so Dr. Ben has done more good for the ranch than you could ever this of because Eldon has been really good for the ranch--his financial background--

LB The banker's background--

OK Yes, it's very important, plus he loves the ranch. He fell in love with it. 'Most everyone falls in love with the ranch as soon as they hear a little bit. But this was three years before--before Eldon, I guess.

LB O.K., so in--

OK In '75 was when--the Attorney General came in--

LB In '75 then.

OK Came in and we got our educational deduction so that we are a tax free facility. Then, about '78, I guess, Eldon knew about the Nature Conservancy and contacted Pieter Hondius, who is very active in it.

LB And this, of course, is Pieter Hondius, son of Eleanor Hondius, so local history comes back.

OK Right. Yes. He helped us, and we worked. And I don't know how many conservation easements were drafted, but we couldn't ever get one that Mr. Carlson would O.K. And the Park would O.K.--both. Mr. Carlson had--

LB Chester Brooks was superintendent at this time.

OK Yes.

LB And he was very instrumental--

OK Right, very instrumental. He had the patience of Job.

LB Yes. Chester was a wonderful person.

OK He was one of a kind. But we must have drafted at least a dozen conservation easement agreements; we talked to Arthur Townsend of the Colorado Historical Society about--no, it must have been the National Historical Society because--about getting on the Register of Historic Places. He could not come to any agreement with Mr. Carlson, so nothing was done about that. However, we are working on that now. Finally,--

LB So, actually this has not--this is not on the Register of National Historic--

OK No.

LB But you are working on this.

OK Pieter Hondius worked and worked and worked. And the money was available for the Nature Conservancy to buy the ranch and hold it for the Park, but that wasn't what we wanted. We wanted the conservation easement whereby the Park does not have control only.

LB This way it stays autonomous.

OK Yes, right.

LB Correct.

OK And we worked three long years on that.

LB Three years it took!

OK Three years! Finally,--

LB I know Chester left just before--

OK Yes, yes. That was such a shame.

LB That was one of his great frustrations.

OK Well, finally in January of '83, I think, we had run up some horrendous attorney fees, and there had been a big fight about the attorney fees. We had brought in an arbitrator to see whether Mr. Carlson and his attorneys' fees were fair, and the arbitrator said they were not. He charged us \$58,000, and the judge O.K.'d the fees. So, we threw away another \$60,000. In '75 Mr. Carlson sold four hundred acres of the ranch to the Park for \$500,000 to pay attorney fees; and then, there wasn't money to pay any more attorney fees. So, we were running out of money. We were going to have to sell land or something. By this time Eldon and I had been made trustees. The Attorney General's office came up with the idea that we could pay Mr. Carlson's attorney fees in essence, buy him off, if he and his wife would give up their trusteeship, would give up their right to name their successor trustees--

LB Yes, that's interesting that Muriel set it up that the trustee name a successor.

OK And Dr. Morgan could name his--he was named to take Victoria Gross's place.

LB And served all of those years!

OK About ten, I think.

LB And then he named--who? Jim Johnson?

OK He named Jim Johnson.

LB Who was Congressman at that time.

OK Right. And Dr. Morgan stayed until we got the easement through.

LB Yes, I remember.

OK And then he quit. He put in ten hard years.

LB He was fair, wasn't he?

OK Very fair. A man of high integrity.

LB Yes.

OK But going back to getting rid of the Carlsons.

LB But outnumbered!

OK We said that--but outnumbered. Yes, everything was two to one, you know. It must have been terribly frustrating, but he hung in there. And so the Carlsons said, "Yes" and signed a note for \$210,000 that we would pay them as soon as the easement went through, and we got the money. Well, just as soon as we got rid of them the easement went through and everything was O.K. Then, we had Mr. Watt to contend with in the summer and didn't--

LB It was James Watt, who was Secretary of the Interior under the first administration of Ronald Reagan. For historical reference, I won't say anything more about Mr. Watt. Go on!

OK So, in October of 1983 the conservation easement was signed and the check for four million dollars was delivered--

LB Four million dollars!

OK To the trustees.

LB Well, just as a member of the community who has had--not close ties with the ranch, but certainly emotional ties--I can say that everybody was finally so glad that it was over!

OK I don't believe that we had any opposition.

LB Oh, no!

OK I don't think so.

LB The whole community was supportive, and the whole community certainly understood what you volunteers, especially you, Orpha, had gone through in trying to save the ranch.

OK I couldn't have done any of it alone. I had to have help, and I've had so much help.

LB But you have been the constant factor.

- OK Well,--
- LB You know.
- OK I've been stubborn.
- LB You had to--
- OK I do want to get into the historical record, too, that the trustees have put 3.7 million into an endowment fund. It can't be touched--the principal can't be touched. We are going to operate on the interest, and we're going to build that back up to the four million dollars.
- LB Good!
- OK We've already put \$50,000 back in. We're building an education center. We start construction--our fiscal year is September 1-August 31--right after our next fiscal year, '85-'86. We hope to have the education center opened for the spring of '86.
- LB And what will it be?
- OK Mostly classrooms and overnight dormitories with kitchen facilities for any of the school groups, school groups that want to come and stay overnight, or for a week, or whatever.
- LB Now, this won't only be BOCES, but will you be reaching out and growing and perhaps be contacting other school districts to tell--
- OK Perhaps, although we want to not--we have between four and five thousand annually now, students--
- LB I guess I hadn't realized it was of that magnitude.
- OK And we don't want to have too many more because of the impact. What we're striving for is more groups that stay longer and not just the day trips. Our other buildings that we used for overnight facilities before have just gotten too bad. We can't use them.
- LB They're very old.
- OK Very old. One of the houses is 1882, and one is 1875.
- LB That's very old! ....
- OK It's over a hundred years old.
- LB Where will this building--will it be one building or--?
- OK It will be one building.
- LB Where will it be constructed?

- OK It's going to be south of the creek on the town road that goes down to the waterworks, over in the trees. You won't even be able to see it.
- LB Oh, I see. Nice! Oh, that's a good placement.
- OK Then, they'll put in new trails and--
- LB For hiking trails and nature trails and--
- OK And they'll still use the museum, but we're just really excited about it. Before you leave, I'll show you the drawing. And BOCES has just hired Dr. Casebeer to do some in-depth work on the educational program at MacGregor--
- LB Oh, good! Wonderful!
- OK We're working with the schools and the superintendents now, and UNC is real interested. They have some in-put into the program.
- LB To develop your programming.
- OK Right. And so that I can let up a little bit.
- LB Yes, you've earned it.
- OK We have hired Lee Braddock who is the Executive Director, and I'm still the ranch manager. Harriet Burgess is the museum manager and co-ordinator of volunteers. And I don't intend to quit, but I'm sixty years old--
- LB And it's time to relax.
- OK I just can't do the things that I used to do.... We have a full-time maintenance man, a full time wrangler--a livestock manager.
- LB And this you can pay for from the return on your investment that you did receive, you know, as the easement. That was the critical financial turnaround.
- OK See, we had--right--we put the money in investments in October of '83, but we didn't get any money off from that until April of '84. We had thirty years of deferred maintenance to take care of plus we hired some men. We had, like I said, a full-time maintenance man and a full-time livestock man. We're doing our ranch work with Percheron horses and using horse-drawn equipment.
- LB Is that new?
- OK Yes.
- LB I haven't seen the horses!



- OK We give hayrides to the school groups.
- LB Great!
- OK We put up hay. We put up about one hundred and fifty tons of hay with the horses this year. In five years our goal is to have the educational program going well in the education building--
- LB Yes, well, have you considered using other volunteers--like maybe some of the summer camps, some of the youths as volunteers on the ranch?
- OK We haven't yet. We've just been putting our energy into, you know, fixing things.
- LB Yes, well, it was saving it, and now you're starting a new phase, a new era, where you will be developing your programming.
- OK Right. And we've got some gardens back this year. We'll have a larger garden next year. Vegetable garden--the MacGregors sold vegetables and produce, you know.
- LB Vegetable garden, that's wonderful.
- OK And they sold chickens. I don't know who--.....
- LB I'll be glad to be a consultant. I've had a garden for ten years.
- OK Good! .... Well, we've had a lot of help with that. Carl Davis-- Carl Lewis, who is an oldtimer up here, has helped us a lot, and he is going to start a strawberry bed this year.
- LB Wonderful. They do very well. Yes, if you can keep the deer from eating them.
- OK Oh, we don't have that problem. With the animals around, the deer don't come around.
- LB Yes.
- OK And we have a log fence--a rail fence around the garden, and we do want a --. Oh, another volunteer that I have at the museum is Joy Pohl. She is very good, and she has helped with the garden. We probably should call Harriet and get a list of the volunteers.
- LB O.K., we can add a list of the volunteers to the transcript to make sure.
- OK Yes, because there must be twenty-five or more that we call on, and I'd hate to--
- LB Omit anybody.
- OK Miss any of them!

- LB That would be fine. We can just add that, you know, in the addenda. Well, you must feel very good about helping because you helped not only Muriel, but you helped generations to come.
- OK Well, I felt--
- LB Instead of looking down Black Canyon and seeing it as it is, we might have been looking at condos and a golf course.
- OK Oh, you bet! I wish that I'd kept those plans.
- LB It would have been wonderful for historical interest.
- OK But I felt that I could touch more people, could help more people this way.
- LB You certainly have.
- OK And I think--we have a lot of handicapped groups, and I'm not a good one to work with the handicapped groups because I'm too much "grandma," I guess, you know, but we do have some women who are very good. It just does my heart good to see those people--adults who have never been out of town.
- LB Able--yes.
- OK We had handicapped scouts from the foothills this year--this summer--that camped. They were all adults and had never been out of the city.
- LB And it's going to be saved!
- OK .... And my husband and my family have been behind me a hundred per cent. I could never have done it without them.
- LB This has been not only a full-time job, but more than full time.
- OK Oh, yes. It's been part of our lives.
- LB Sure.
- OK My grandchildren range from four to twenty years old, and the oldest ones were just babies when I started here. Some of them weren't born yet, and they have grown up here. It's just a part of them. It's a part of our lives, and I feel that I've helped my family. My family has become a lot stronger--
- LB Because of the adversities.
- OK Right.
- LB But you hung in there.
- OK That's right. They've learned that anything worth having is worth fighting for.

LB You've got to fight for it!

OK And working for, and I think that the ranch has been good to us. It really has.

LB It has enriched your lives.

OK It certainly has, and it has enriched the lives of all the volunteers. It really has. It has become a family thing. One person comes to volunteer, and the whole family is in on it before you know it. In fact, Mrs. Thomson has a grandson that's ten that has grown up here on the ranch. Her children--

LB And how wonderful!

OK Yes, it's a wonderful place for them. And that's one thing that has made my feelings so strong that it should be saved for children because I can see the difference in our children having been here.

LB Just having had the opportunity to be on the ranch--to be on the land.

OK That's right. It helps everybody. It was just supposed to be.

LB It was meant to be.

OK It was meant to be!

LB Well, I'm glad we finally got together, Orpha!

OK I am, too!

LB It has taken a while.

OK It's taken four or five years.

LB Thank you very much.

Date: July 10, 1985

Transcriber, editor, and final paper: Lorraine Roberts

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